IMPORTANT CATTLE FEEDING EXPERIMENTS IN DEVONSHIRE.

[From the Home Journal, December 7th.]

A large number of agriculturists and landowners assembled a few days ago at Halwell, Devon, to witness the results of feeding experiments undertaken by W. J. Harris, of Halwell Manor, Highampton. After partaking of a luncheon the company assembled on the tennis lawn, which overlooks a meadow, and there witnessed various animals being fed on ensilage, a new food recently introduced for cattle. The tests supplied were very severe. The horses were offered oats and ensilage, and nearly all of them preferred ensilage. The cattle (mostly Devons) had ensilage and good hay put in heaps about the field, on which there was likewise an abundant bite of meadow grass. All of them came galloping up the field directly the men had put down their bundles, and, leaving hay and grass, went straight for the ensilage. Mr. Harris does not consider that he has attained perfect success, as a few mouldy spots were met with here and there. He attributes these partly to lumps of salt, and considers that where salt is used it should be crushed to powder. He also intends to increase the amount of pressure. All present had every opportunity of critically examining the silo and its contents, and were greatly pleased with what they saw. Every one was allowed to take away a sample, and many farmers were heard to say that they should immediately follow Mr. Harris' example, and construct silos for themselves.

Mr. Harris, who was loudly cheered, said he must begin by saying how pleased he was to see so many agriculturists present that day from all parts of Devon and Cornwall, and he only wished that he could show that personal courtesy to every one which he should have liked, but which it was hardly possible for him to show individually. They had seen the experiment he had tried on his farm. He did not mean to say that that experiment had been a perfect success, but he did claim that it was much more than a partial success, and he saw his way perfectly clear to make it a thorough success another year. The reason why grass should keep when stored in this way was precisely the same which made potted meats and fruits keep. It meant just this, that there was no circulation of the air, and that what little air there was in the fodder, was expelled by pressure. The fact was that decomposition only took place when any substance came in connection with atmospheric air, or really with that portion of it called oxygen. They had seen the silo, which was 35 feet long, 18 feet broad, and 10½ feet deep, and ought to contain 120 tons of green fodder, if filled full. There were many faults of construction in the silo, which he intended to alter next year. The roof, for instance, ought to be higher, for his men found it very difficult to work under it as it was at present. If he could raise the roof about four feet it would be possible to fill the silo more than full. In a short time the contents would press down to two-thirds of its original depth, and then in a little while they would be able to fill up and cover the the silo permanently. That would ensure greater success. With regard to the construction of the silo, he might say that the walls were two feet thick and the sides and bottom were thoroughly cemented. There was also a slate roof. The cost was about £110, and there was a man present who would build them for that sum exactly as the one they had seen. The interest on the cost at 5 per cent. would be 110s. per year, so they would get 110 tons of ensilage at a cost of 1s. per ton per year, which would not add much to the cost. It must be remembered that the building would not only do for ensilage, but could be used for storing other things as well. For instance, they might make the roof so that it would cover a cornstack, but he only used the upper portion of his silo to store turnips. Therefore, he did not think the whole of the building should be charged as devoted to ensilage. Now, the question was whether the building of these silos could be cheapened. In the first place, the bottom could be made of clay. He thought that five or six inches of clay—and they abounded in clay in that neighborhood—in the bottom would be as good as cement. He had been asked if he thought cob walls would do, but he doubted whether cement would hold on cob; and if the walls were of cob only, he was was afraid that it would take away some of the moisture from the contents. Now as to the mode of filling. They cut the grass, and as it was cut it was carried. They put in as many loads as they could, and though he tried to stop off when the rain came he did not know that it was necessary. The fact was that he did not like putting rainwater into the silo, though he did not mind how much sap was there. (Hear, hear.) Many people who had silos "chaffed" their grass before putting it away in this manner. He himself had not gone to this expense—as he thought he would not incur any expense in this matter that was not likely to be incurred by a tenant farmer. He thought it cut out just as well in its present state, but if the grass were "chaffed" first ensilage would weigh more to the cubic foot. Lord Tollemache's ensilage weighed forty-nine pounds to the cubic foot, but that which they had seen only weighed about forty pounds. With his grass he put some salt, knowing that it was good for animals, but he did not know that the effect was very great. From the way in which the salt was thrown in there were lumps deposited in places, and if he used salt again he would have it crushed. The next point to be considered was the weighting, and this was the most expensive part of the operation. He had had to take his men from other work to attend to this, and a portion of the weighting had to be done at night. He had had a conversation with his foreman, respecting the cost of this operation, and found it had cost him £4 extra in wages. That was about 1s. per ton, and it did not seem very much; but there was also the inconvenience of having to take men off other farm work. He was quite sure that a gain could be effected in the construction of the silos, and he had his impression as to the way. He thought the weight might be provided in the roof, if it were so fixed as to work up and down. He thought this could be done at a very small expense. The final covering was composed of boards, which were put between the ensilage and the weights. It seemed that there must be something that they did not mind spoiling which must be placed on the top of the ensilage. Rushes would do; but he preferred something drier, which would absorb the moisture, and thought dowse (oat husks) would be better. The contents of his silo were taken off about nine acres of grass land. It was very poor land, but at the same time they cut a good crop, and if this ensilage was to be a success, which he believed it would be, there could be no doubt that it was in such hilly countries as Devonshire and Westmoreland, where they had so much rain, that it would prove of special benefit to farmers. The advantages he claimed for the system were several. He did not think it would do away with hay entirely. For instance, if they had a good heavy shear they could cut, say, two swathes for ensilage and one or two for hay. By this means the portion intended for hay could be dried and saved much more quickly. One point was that they would save some of the time that would be taken if it was all made into hay. Another point was that they could cut their grass at its best instead of [illegible] it for settled fine weather. They could cut their grass at its best, with all its seeds in it, which made a great difference in point of quality. I third point was that the after-grass, in consequence of the grass being cut at its best, would be better, and worth 5s. per acre more per annum. Another point was that they would save growing so cheap a crop of roots as they did. If they wanted to clean their land, he believed there was nothing like the old system of a fallow. They got thereby a better crop the next year, and they all knew the expense of cleaning the land in this wet country. The question was, "could tenant farmers afford to build these silos?" Well, he thought that many could not, and that those who did ought to have security given them under the Agricultural Holdings Act, and be paid the value of the silo on the termination of their lease. (Hear, hear.) Of course such a provision could not be passed until these silos had proved a certain success. There were many other silos in the country, and sufficient evidence would soon be forthcoming to prove whether or not it was right that such a provision should be embodied in the Act, so that it might be perfectly safe for tenants to build silos. At the same time he considered it far better that landlords should build and own all farm buildings. A system had grown up in this country which only gave to many owners a life interest in the land, and he considered it was a system which had not worked well for the country. He thought, however, that if the Government were to lend money on the joint security of landlord and tenant, requiring a large sinking fund, so that they might soon have the money back, it would be an outlay which no one would grudge, and which would benefit the country and the farmer. If these silos were going to effect such an improvement, as he believed they must, it must surely be to the interest of the State to assist farmers and landlords to improve their farms, and thereby to increase home production. So far as the results of the feeding went, he thought they had seen enough to convince them that animals would eat this food, and seemed to like it. No one would question that fact; but the question arose as to how it would suit as a continuance. He had only had his silo open for ten days or a fortnight, but he had during that time put three cows on ensilage entirely, and three on the usual food. In the first week those that had not had ensilage proved rather the better, but in the second week the ensilage cows were the best; but he could not claim that the ensilage cows did better than the others, because one of the latter took a chill and did not yield as much as before; but he could claim that they did as well, and that was a great deal at present. They had no doubt all observed that the upper layer in the silo was imperfect. He did not know why it was so, unless it was due to the silo not being filled at one time. He did not know if the gas which had formed in the lower portion had permeated and caused the slightly mouldy appearance noticeable in the clover buds on the top. He had given them the benefit of his experience, and he hoped that what they had seen might lead to the system being generally adopted, and that it would make them all much richer than they had been. He had brought the whole system before them, and as it was for the greater part a success, he had invited them to come and see and judge for themselves. He desired that they should see the bad as well as the good, and for that purpose took no care to hide the slight mouldiness which they saw in the upper portion. He was very glad that they had come there, and he was very pleased to see them.

On the conclusion of his remarks, three hearty cheers were given for Mr. Harris.

Mr. Perriman proposed a formal vote of thanks to Mr. Harris for showing agriculturists what could be done, and what he hoped in future would benefit all.

The vote was carried by acclamation, and the assemblage dispersed.

Old Clipper Ships.

The famous clipper ship Young America has recently been sold for $15,000 to Austrian parties, who will use her in carrying oil between New York and Trieste. This vessel was built over thirty years ago in New York. She gained the reputation of being the fastest clipper ship afloat. She has made several trips between New York and San Francisco in less than ninety days. Her fastest time was from San Francisco to Liverpool in less than one hundred days. She is one of the last famous clippers which were built for the San Francisco trade. The David Crockett, another old clipper, which has raced often around Cape Horn with the Young America, of which she was a formidable rival, was recently sold, and she brought $15,250.

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